

6959.2. 129  
3

**C H A R G E,**

ADDRESSED TO THE

**C L E R G Y**

OF ANY DIOCESE IN THE KINGDOM,

*By James Bean*

**L O N D O N,**

PRINTED FOR F. AND C. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M DCC XXII.

A  
C H A R E

C L E R G Y

OF THE DIocese IN THE KINGDOM

L O N D O N

PRINTED FOR T. AND C. RIVINGTON

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M DCCC

---

# C H A R G E.

---

REVEREND BRETHREN,

**T**HE Christian Ministry being instituted for promoting the true happiness of man, as well in the present world as in that to come, an attentive observation of the times, however superior to secular views and habits we are required to be, is a duty of our office. By such observation we note the rise of new evils and disorders which demand new remedies, or at least a different application of the old; we discover new opportunities of doing good, which we ought to embrace; and from the surprising changes which sometimes take place in human affairs, we are prepared to draw those lessons of admonition and wisdom which they are calculated to afford.

A 2

afford. The instructors of mankind are bound to mark the events of Providence, and should stand ready to improve them.

Indeed it is hardly possible not to notice with a steady and inquisitive eye, the occurrences of so eventful a period as the present. We have seen a great nation attracting to itself the notice of all Europe, by one of the most extraordinary revolutions that the pages of history ever recorded. It is not to be wondered at indeed, that an event of such magnitude, and which involves in it so many grand political speculations, should divide a great part of mankind. Here let us take our side: but indulge the hope which spiritual men ought to feel, that the diffusion of virtue and happiness will be the result of this change, in so conspicuous a part of the theatre of Europe. We are the ministers of the God in whose hand are all the events of time. Whatever interests unite or divide mankind, it belongs to our character to be devoted to those of real religion, as the cause of God; and to meet every great occurrence in the world with a hope, that it will be made eventually to contribute to the enlargement of his church.

Would



Would to God, there was that visible reverence for the sacred interests of Christianity predominating in the political movements of the present times, that would encourage us to believe, that the advancement of piety was a principal object in the view of those who are deeply engaged in managing them ! But, alas ! however it may be our ardent desire, that an over-ruling Providence may finally conduct things to the further extension of true religion, it is impossible not to feel some causes of apprehension from the present aspect of things. We cannot but observe in our own happy country, that while men are panegyricizing liberty, and publishing their triumphs in the diffusion of it, they are mingling with their eulogiums, sentiments that strike at the order and tranquility of society ; and give us too much reason to suppose, that masked as the friends of mankind, they are seeking to render them discontented, disunited, and refractory.

In a careful study of the history of man, we cannot but be struck with the miseries that have resulted from the want of subordination in those placed under authority. From this source we trace the evils existing in the

moral world. What is the depravity of mankind, but the defection of the human race from its supreme Governor? What are the miseries attendant on this depravity, but the visible disorders of a disturbed system, a system deranged by the spirit of disobedience? If we contract our views, and contemplate man as he appears in those smaller communities which are the abstracts of the larger, the same reflections must occur to our minds. We see the same causes produce similar effects. Wherever the spirit of contumacy prevails, there is misery.

These considerations lead us always to be alarmed, whenever we perceive any thing at work that is calculated to lessen the sense of subordination. And do not we know that there is such an agency now in existence amongst us? and is it altogether unsuccessful? No, indeed. The spirit of subordination is evidently declining in this land; and a vicious independence, that spurns at all authority, has already begun to shew itself.

This refractory spirit is calling aloud for an alteration of our present circumstances, and is distinguishing itself, among other things, by an endeavour to turn the public  
mind

mind against civil establishments of religion in general, and your order in particular.

A short admonition occurs to me relative to this attempt, *Let us be careful that our own conduct does not favour the designs of our adversaries.* The abilities of those who are making these attempts, or at least the reception their writings meet with, is such, that they are not to be treated altogether with contempt. And I would caution my reverend brethren against indulging too great a security from the present peaceable state of things in this country. True it is, that however manifest the intentions of those are, who are "given to change," the present state of things does not, on the whole, threaten the immediate execution of them. The guardians of the constitution in church and state, possess the public confidence. There is an evident reluctance in the bulk of the people to a change. The country is in prosperous circumstances. All these are facts. But can you, who are so read in the history of the world, forget the instability of all things here? Can you forget the unexpected transitions that have taken place, where previous circumstances have predicted no such event?

We cannot overlook these things. We cannot but, at times, be struck with the possibility of such a transition occurring in our own country.

This fluctuating nature of all things here occurs likewise to our adversaries. It is an idea that affects men according to their respective views. It should make us vigilant, cautious, provident. It inspires them with hope. I do not conceive that they themselves expect to effect the accomplishment of their designs at present : but they know that critical periods may arrive ; and their employment *now*, is the laying in of combustibles against that opportune season of applying the match.

Should the fire kindle, it will devour perhaps with indiscriminate fury. Be that as it may, whatever is known to be worthless *must* then fall. And shall we stand if truth should mark us out as men paid to instruct, yet without knowledge ; supported as examples to the nation, yet destitute of virtue ourselves ? Shall we think to check its destructive progress by declaiming about " our excellent church," by dealing out invectives against schismatics, or calling up former



mer instances of the anarchy and bloodshed they have occasioned? No. The age is passed in which language of this kind made some impression; in the present day it will scarcely be heard.

My reverend brethren, the times will not allow us to lull each other into security, by giving and receiving encomiums on the learning and piety of the clergy. We are not met to salute and compliment each other. We are met together for our own, and the public benefit; and permit me to attempt this, by a faithful address.

I should smile at all the attempts the emissaries of faction are making on the existence of our church, if I saw the clergy diligent, devoted, and exemplary. But, alas! It is too evident, that as a body, they are not what their predecessors were. They are losing their character, and of course their consequence: and till the former is recovered, vain will be all the attempts to recover what is lost of the latter, or even to retain so much of it as is yet left. If I would prove that your consequence is declining, I need only refer to some facts, which are of too public a nature to have eluded your observation. Do  
you

you not perceive, that the sectaries are gaining ground on you in many parts of the kingdom? Do not we see this to be the case with at least one body of religionists, namely the Methodists? And to what are we to attribute their progress? To their learning? To their ingenuity? To any popular prejudice in their favour? From these sources they derive no strength: but they are diligent. They attend to the people and you neglect them, must they not gain ground on you? If the dying man wants the instructions and consolations of a Christian minister, and you instead of being ready to attend him, are scarcely to be found, except at places of fashionable resort: can you wonder that your flocks are divided? If you desert your post to tread the circle of pleasure, the pious, although illiterate mechanic, seizes the station you have left open to him, and the diminution of your importance is a consequence, not so much of his address, as of your own inattention.

We cannot overlook another circumstance that has contributed to the success of this people. You perceive, that, though under many disadvantages, they obtain attention.

To what is it owing? You will tell me perhaps, that their earnestness will alone account for this. It must be confessed, that there is something so fascinating in a vehement manner of addressing an audience, that a man of any principles might become popular by it for a while. But when I consider the length of time in which these people have supported themselves, I cannot but look for something more than *manner* in order to account for the fact. And I think I discover the cause, in the *matter* of their preaching. There is certainly something worthy of notice in that. Through all that want of literature, that enthusiasm, those gross violations of all the rules of propriety and decorum found amongst them, we perceive that they inculcate the great leading truths of Christianity. I do not say, they have made a fair and full exhibition of the religion of Christ; but it must be acknowledged, that they have distinguished themselves, by recalling the attention of men to some truths of prime importance in the Christian system, which we have unhappily neglected.

Abandon those doctrines which are impressed with the seal of heavenly truth, set

up any thing in their stead, and assist in its publication with all that learning, force of language, or grace of action can give, and you will not for any great length of time interest mankind. It is not God's appointment. And however dextrous the workman may be, if he neglects to use the means which God furnishes for the service, he will find he is "labouring in the fire." Evangelical truths, under all disadvantages, will make their way to the heart: they have the wisdom of God and the necessities of men to aid them in their progress. Let us therefore return to that kind of preaching which enlightened and changed the world; which, in the hands of poor fishermen, triumphed over the philosophy of Greece and Rome; and in the use of which, unpatronized and unlettered men are still producing effects which the unprejudiced cannot overlook, however the bigoted may shut their eyes against these facts. If these men can obtain attention, by declaring the great essential truths of Christianity, what execution might not you do with such instruments in your hands, who have had a liberal education; whose rank in the community is held respectable; and to many of whom,



whom; whole parishes are looking; as to their spiritual instructors?

If there is any thing of importance in those doctrines which are peculiar to Christianity, it must be a matter of real concern to one who has the welfare of the church at heart, to see those doctrines neglected. And I must assert it, that they have been neglected. An attention therefore, to the great points of the Christian faith, must be pressed on the clergy, by him who would successfully attempt to recover their consequence in the community. You do not "make full proof of your ministry" in exhibiting the character of mere moralists. There is a superior character to be aimed at; a character, that is formed only in the school of Christ, namely, that of a Christian divine. By a Christian divine, I do not mean the first of scholars; the distinguished polemic; the man who has abilities which qualify him for the divinity chair. Something short of the endowments necessary for such a situation, may be sufficient for the path in which most of us have to move. But surely every clergyman should reach after that comprehension in professional knowledge, which may qualify him to attend to,  
and

and effect something in the variety of cases that may come before him. I mean therefore the pastor, whose retired hours are not appropriated to the pursuits of such learning as is foreign to the design of his office, but who is aiming to be able to defend any religious truth that may be attacked in his presence; to inform an inquirer on any topic on which he might seek satisfaction; to direct in any of the commonly occurring difficulties that may be submitted to him as a spiritual instructor; and to comfort those distressed persons, whom either the trials of life or an anxiety about their salvation, may send to him for relief. In short, I mean one who is grounded in the faith, one who is determined to know comparatively nothing among his flock, but Jesus Christ and him crucified, and who is daily endeavouring to "approve himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; by rightly dividing the word of truth." In steadily pursuing the views, prosecuting the labours, and endeavouring in a dependence on God's holy Spirit, to make the energy and effect of this character felt, you may consider yourselves as having

the honour of being " workers together with  
" God."

God forbid that I should be so unjust, as  
to involve you all in indiscriminate censure !  
I have the happiness to know, that many of  
you speak according to the oracles of God,  
and are " examples to the believers in word,  
" in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in  
" faith, and in purity." All that I have to  
recommend to you, is to study the aspect of  
the times, in order to see what political evils  
are generating, and how to prevent their  
growth. There seems now to be a loud call  
on our order, to attend to formation of the  
public mind.

In exhorting you to attend to this call, I  
am only putting you upon an endeavour to  
counteract those, who are zealously employed  
in attempting to corrupt the public mind.  
Political pamphlets are scattering the seeds of  
discontent far and wide. In contemplating  
these productions, we do not discover a vir-  
tuous patriotism as the ruling principle of  
the writers. There is a malevolence of spirit  
pervading them, the evident design of which  
is to inject an implacable antipathy into the  
minds of the people against their rulers, and  
to

to excite a spirit of revolt. These designs are led on with the usual address of almost all public disturbers; namely, by placing that popular idea in their front, the love of liberty. A virtuous love of liberty indeed, is an honourable and useful passion: it ennobles him who is warmed by it, it renders him beneficial to others. And we who are the ministers, of a religion that breathes the purest spirit of philanthropy, should rejoice whenever we see the comforts of mankind likely to be increased. Far be it from us to be disturbed at the extension of true freedom! As those who ought to know something of human nature, we are aware, that the great are likely to abuse power, and that the inferior orders are apt to disregard authority: our religion teaching us not to countenance excesses of any kind, forbids us to aid the encroachments that the one are apt to make on the other. Equally indignant at the idea of being the tools of either tyranny or faction, we are led to venerate the promoters of a virtuous liberty. But we hesitate to ascribe this honour to the modern apostles of liberty. We think, that we have reason to consider them as persons who are instigated by a  
cri-



criminal passion for liberty, and that this is what they are seeking to excite in the people.

Every well disposed mind must be affected to perceive, that this vicious kind of liberty (more properly described by the word licentiousness) is spreading amongst us. The respect once paid to rank, to office, and to age, is decreasing daily. Majesty itself is insulted by licentious prints; and the public familiarized to the sight of the supreme magistrate held up to the derision of his subjects, lose more and more of their native veneration for the person of the ruler; and with it, that necessary and wholesome regard to order, whence arises the strength, the beauty, and the comfort of civil society.

You cannot but have observed the success which has attended this pernicious agency. You must have perceived that propensity to a vicious independence which the current tone of private conversation has of late discovered, and you are alarmed, no doubt, at the prospect of those future evils it seems to predict. A moment's reflection on these things, will suggest to us the path of duty.

The ministers of religion have great opportunities of influencing the minds of the

B

people

people with respect to political questions, by the attention that is paid to them—by the frequent opportunities they have of addressing a collection of people. Let the preacher exercise his spiritual office in subserviency to political views, and how successfully may he prosecute his main object, by the advantage he has in being appointed to conduct the solemnities of religious worship. Here, he can blend a political, with a religious sentiment. He can work it into a prayer or a sermon. By an artful association of religious and political ideas the mind has been heated and wrought up to a certain degree of susceptibility. Thus prepared it has been struck by a political artificer, and received that impression he wished it to retain.

But, am I going to recommend it to you to be political preachers? God forbid, we should ever be recognized under that character! What I have just mentioned, was merely with a view of reminding you, how much the minister of religion is capable of influencing the public mind. Here is a power in our hands, by the exercise of which, some have thrown society into disorder; it may be  
suc-

successfully employed by us to better purposes.

Should it be asked me, Whether, and how far a minister of religion should interfere in political matters, I am prepared to answer, as follows. To the first question, I humbly offer this reply, It should seem that the ministers of religion should never interfere in political matters, but in critical emergencies, and in the plainest cases. Where things are not thus circumstanced, it is indecorous in them to appear to act in concert with politicians. They are, by profession, spiritual men; and always subject themselves to contempt, when they are seen to take an active part in secular pursuits. Besides this, it may be presumed, that they are not all qualified for the part they assume. They have not time sufficient for the studies necessary to form both the statesman, and the divine. If they attain to any proficiency in the former of these professions, it is highly probable they have been negligent in attending to the duties of the latter. If, on the other hand, sensible of the superior importance of theological pursuits, they have devoted most of their time to these, they are probably but superfi-

cial politicians; and if so, their ideas on the subject will be crude, and their schemes, in all likelihood, visionary.

That there may, however, be political cases, in which it may be lawful, yea, laudable, for them to interfere, I cannot deny. But I pretend not to great accuracy in drawing the line. And I seem to myself to keep at a safe distance from the extremes on either side, in exhorting the clergy never publicly to concern themselves in political matters, unless in critical emergencies, and in the plainest cases. Am I required to be somewhat more explicit? Will it be asked, what are the occasions that will justify the clergy in concerning themselves with the civil state of their country? I answer, Then do they seem to be called to something more than silently to observe what is passing, when such political ideas are spreading, as strike at the fundamental principles of morality, as are destructive of all sense of subordination, and which threaten the peace of the community. When such ideas are not only inculcated but adopted, government calls upon all whom she protects, to lend an helping hand. It is a critical emergency. Nor can the minister of reli-



religion excuse his refusal to obey the summons, by saying, that the thing does not come within his province, for it certainly does. It is not merely a civil question, it is as much a moral as a political question. Here are sentiments in circulation, which affect not only the relation that exists between a king and his subjects, but that which exists between a master and a servant, a parent and a child, yea, which affects that relation which exists between God and his creatures.

Leaving you, reverend brethren, to compare these reflections, with the aspect of the present times, I proceed to answer this question, *In what way* ought a minister of religion to interfere in political matters, when the occasion is such as to require his attention? Attempts of this kind are never to be made by laying aside the proper character of Christian ministers. At any rate, this character is to be preserved. Now, there is a way of interfering in these things by which this character is still preserved; and it is at the same time perhaps, not the least likely method of effecting the ends aimed at, by such interference. The rule I have laid down for myself in endeavouring to obtain these

ends, is to prosecute them by aiming at the infusion of such principles into the minds of the people, as without any specific and formal application of them to certain characters or designs, may silently act as an antidote to the poison of corrupt writings.

I prefer this method to the coming forward in a more explicit way, for several reasons. It is less likely to subject us to the suspicion of standing candidates for the douceurs of the state. By this method, you do not call off the attention of a religious assembly from the eternal world. You excite no pulpit-war, the prelude frequently, yea, the cause of civil war. This method is further eligible, as you attack the adversary, without giving him consequence. And lastly, it strikes at the root of the evil. I would not therefore stand forward as the avowed antagonist of political seducers. I would not appear like an hired declaimer against their doctrines, but I would aim at forming a character possessed of feelings, that would be shocked at their designs; and dispositions, that would spontaneously lead them to what is right. If there are any public discontents existing, let the minister of Christ observe the principles that

that feeds them. Let him attack this principle, shew its evil tendency, and avail himself of all opportunities of counteracting its influence. All this he may do, and yet never be recognized as a political preacher; never diminish the simplicity and dignity of the pastoral character. And by the quiet infusion of principles calculated to render his countrymen sober, orderly, and happy, he may successfully address himself to the destruction of mischievous doctrines, while he leaves their authors to sink into their deserved oblivion.

Thus I exhort you, reverend brethren, who are endeavouring to make full proof of your ministry, to avail yourselves of the opportunities you have of influencing the public mind; and to counteract the endeavours of those, whose aim seems to be to disunite and disorder society, by weakening the sense of subordination in its members. From you, in whom I perceive the true pastoral spirit, much is to be expected. And I trust that none of you will think that the task, which from a sense of duty I have been commending to you, is foreign to the design of your office. Your great object, I know, is to de-

liver men from their sins, and in particular from infidelity as the cause of them. I were much to be pitied should I attempt to lessen your attention to this evil, the cause of so many others. Yet I would remind you, that in the eager prosecution of an object of prime importance, we are sometimes apt to overlook inferior objects, which nevertheless ought to have a proportionate share of our attention. While therefore you are zealous in endeavouring to spread the knowledge of evangelical doctrine, let me intreat you, to keep your eye likewise on that disposition to violate the order of society, so visible in the present day. Let me exhort you to be careful, that no *incidental reflection* may escape you, from which this disposition may derive strength. Men of your serious turn of mind are often led, when discoursing, for instance, on the vanity of the world, to speak of the unsubstantial nature of human greatness—to endeavour to bring down “the lofty looks of “men” in power, by setting forth the frailty, the vanities, or the vices, of those who have filled the superior stations of life. You have naturally from these views adverted to the meanness and impiety of a servile attachment



ment to the great. The present times require a guarded and delicate management of such topics. Let us be careful not to commit such a mistake as to attack the evils of a past age, by a kind of address that seems to countenance those of the present. Servility is not the reigning error of the times in which we live. There is an opposite vice already gone forth, to which our attention is to be directed; and as it is ready to take hold of every thing in its way that may augment its force, be it our care, that it collects nothing from the Christian pulpit.

Methinks, I see my country direct an expressive eye to us, as if, from the nature of our office she drew encouragements to expect from us, above all the orders of the state, the most lively and disinterested regard to her safety and happiness. To the clergy, the reflective part of the nation is looking: much, unquestionably, is in your power. To you, is still consigned the task of forming the manners of the age. As you sustain a literary character, many of you are entrusted with the rising generation, and have to mould the minds of those youths, who are hereafter to fill the great departments of the state. And  
in

in your ecclesiastical capacity, the forming and strengthening of moral principle in the people at large, yet rests with you.

Let us in these respective offices have one object; namely, the recovery of the nation to God. In the general disregard to his being and authority, is to be found all the substantial causes of apprehension and anxiety, relative to our safety. The licentious assertions of modern demagogues, uttered by them as instances of the growing light of the age, are but the effects of growing impiety. The corruption of manners has formed both the masters and the disciples. The literary profligate becomes the oracle of faction, and the dissolute vulgar, long habituated to a disregard of divine authority, are easily led to insult that image of it which ought to be revered in the person of the master, the parent, or the magistrate: and are therefore found fit instruments for the perpetration of those mischiefs, to which they are directed by interested leaders.

However concerned for the welfare of our country, discerning minds are not surprized at that which occasions this concern. Things have been long tending to this. A general  
dis-

disregard of religion, not in the least lessened by the feeble efforts of that superficial and ductile morality which has been taught in many places, was likely to increase; till at length all sense of duty being extinguished, those restraints which hitherto had preserved society in peace, would be broken through. Those restraints seem now to be giving way; and we must fly to them, and endeavour to strengthen them, ere they are entirely gone. In private life, we feel that they are every day growing weaker and weaker. If a sense of subordination is not revived, there will not be a servant to be found. All government, both in public and private life, will be found impracticable, and a disgraceful and distressing anarchy will present itself to the spectator, as the ruin of that social edifice which was raised by the labour of ages.

According to the doctrine of political reformers, there seems to be no evil worthy of being mentioned but that of slavery. But are there no other evils? Is not the want of an obedient disposition a serious evil? Is it not one of the greatest causes of misery? In the connection between parents and children, masters and servants, has it not been found, that  
 life

life has been embittered more from this cause, than from any other? On the other hand, when is society so beautiful; when are the individuals who compose it so happy, as when the spirit of subordination is felt all through it? Every one keeping his assigned place, every one performing the duties of his situation, every one throughout the several gradations of the community exhibiting a sense of obedience to his immediate superior, and all conspiring to honour the will of the Supreme Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, This in perfection is heaven. A state in which there seems to exist various orders, and in which the perfection of happiness is experienced.

To bring the world to a resemblance of this, to bring down to earth as much as possible of heaven, is confessedly the end of your office. And in the genuine influence of Christianity on the hearts and lives of men, we certainly shall find some resemblance of that state. To this let your prayers, your studies, your endeavours, be directed. While you are attempting this, the lot of the messengers of God in former times may be yours. Your admonitions may not produce their intended



tended effect. The increase of wealth, the luxury, the refinements, of a great commercial nation, may counteract you, in every effort you are making to christianize mankind. The stream of dissipation may bear away every mound thrown up by ministers or magistrates. But, O be not you carried away with them. Let us not discern in your language, your dress, or your habits, the vices or vanities of the age.

Do not forget by what names your office is distinguished in the holy scriptures. The labours of husbandmen, the toils of fishermen, the fatigues of soldiers, are what those who assume the clerical function must consider themselves called to. Let them not misunderstand either their calling, or their present situation: the holy scriptures condemn the soft, luxurious, useless ecclesiastic, nor is the world any longer disposed to support him. You live in evil times, but if you understand them aright you will perceive that they urge you to greater devotedness in your profession. If the true spirit of the Christian ministry is in you, the more iniquity abounds, the more you will feel yourselves called to exert every power that can be employed in the work of God.

God. Nor will you labour in vain, if you persevere in well doing. You may be able to close your ministerial course, rejoicing to perceive, that you leave your country rising, not only in civil, but moral improvement. But if you are carried off by the prevalence of evil; you, the instructors—the monitors—the examples of the age, all is gone! The lights are extinguished! The salt has lost its flavour! and darkness and barrenness covers the earth!

May we be preserved from the corruptions of the age in which we live, and be enabled faithfully to discharge the trust committed unto us, and God will be with us; that God who stilleth the enemy and the avenger. In taking care of those he has given you in charge, you shall find he will take care of you. Seek therefore the present and future welfare of your flocks, and you may bid defiance to your enemies. The people will love you. They will feel you are necessary to them. Yea, that you are a blessing to them. You may despise the language of those, who assuming a kind of prophetic foresight, have predicted the annihilation of your order, if the people see you are employed for their good; if they find they are rendered-

dered happy by your labours. Obscure and desperate innovators may attempt to turn the hand of your country against you, but in the recollection of your known piety, diligence, and usefulness, such an attempt will be received with indignation: and serve to strengthen that attachment to you, which your adversaries may endeavour to dissolve.

F I N I S.

your labour. Obedience and  
submission are due to him the  
head of the church, but in the  
case of your known infirmities  
and weakness, which will be  
a hindrance to you, which you  
are not to neglect.